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Executive Registry

77-476

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15 February 1977

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

[REDACTED]
Executive Assistant to
DCI-Designate

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FROM:

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT:

Admiral Turner's Question re: "NIE
for the Middle East" of September 1976

1. Attached are the following documents requested by
Admiral Turner after meeting with a Member of Congress who
claimed the NIE and related material had a "pro-Arab bias."

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C. Dr. Joseph Churba: "Post Mortem on Middle East Estimates: the Soviet Factor" dated 6 October 1976. This paper is, again, not an Intelligence Community product and apparently was prepared at Dr. Churba's own initiative. According to MGEN Tighe (Asst. Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF), it has not been disseminated.

Dr. Churba is concerned with Estimates written between August 1967 and December 1973; he does not address NIEs produced after 1973 and his paper is not applicable to later NIEs, including that attached as Item A. The thesis he wishes to advance is that Community analysts, during this period, failed to understand the "full magnitude" of Soviet involvement in the Middle East. (Note: I have marked those sections of Churba's paper which discuss his thesis.)

2. Concerning Admiral Turner's request for my independent analysis of the above three documents insofar as I detect a lack of full objectivity in the NIE itself, and particularly if the NIE might have done more to present differing views or conclusions, I need only point out that either Dr. Churba or his associate participated in all the Community meetings which resulted in the production of the NIE - including the drafting of the Terms of Reference. According to the National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East [redacted] who chaired these meetings, Dr. Churba provided two dissenting views which can be found on pages 1 and 3 of the Estimate. These dissents - which were endorsed by the then Asst. Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF (MGEN George Keegan) - hold that [redacted]

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and that the Soviets may now perceive that a unilateral projection of their military forces into a Middle East conflict could be accomplished with minimum risk.

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4. The second dissent asserts that the Soviets have not only more positive perceptions of their possibilities in the Middle East, but also greater capabilities to project military power into the area than they are credited with by the NIE. Again, no evidence is offered for this different view of Soviet perceptions and capabilities, and it is noteworthy that the two sections of the NIE which specifically and at length concentrate on these questions do not contain dissents by Dr. Churba.

5. It should be noted here that the national estimating process is designed to ensure the inclusion of dissents for the purpose of providing all informed opinion possible in the intelligence assessments presented by the DCI to the President and the NSC. Although every effort is made to arrive at a single Community view, any NIO who attempted to suppress or otherwise distort dissenting opinions from one or another element of the Community would find himself effectively challenged by an appeal to the DCI by the NFIB member whose representative believed himself so suppressed. As far as the NIE in question is concerned, I have been unable to discover any indication that Dr. Churba felt he was constrained in any way in making his dissents.

6. As a final item, I attach two clippings from the New York Times concerning Dr. Churba, who as you are aware, is no longer employed by Air Force Intelligence. It is evident from these articles - as well as from his paper - that Dr. Churba holds very strongly to certain assumptions about the intentions of the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Although as noted above Air Force Intelligence has not disseminated his paper and, indeed, specifically denied its release to inquiring Senate staff members, Dr. Churba's views appear to be known to the Hill.

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